

with the utmost respect

83. 1476.

THE DANGER OF
VIOLENT INNOVATIONS IN THE STATE,

HOW SPECIOUS SOEVER THE PRETENCE,

EXEMPLIFIED FROM THE

REIGNS OF THE TWO FIRST STUARTS;

I N A

S E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE

METROPOLITICAL CHURCH OF CHRIST,

CANTERBURY,

ON MONDAY, JANUARY 31, 1785,

BEING THE DAY APPOINTED TO BE OBSERVED AS THE
ANNIVERSARY OF THE

MARTYRDOM OF KING CHARLES I.

By GEORGE BERKELEY, D. C. L.

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PREBENDARY OF CANTERBURY,

AND CHANCELLOR OF BRECKNOCK.

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MDCCXCIV.

ADVERTISEMENT.

IT is now nine years since this discourse was preached, and the author has found no reason, from the political state of Europe, during that period, which inclines him to think the danger of innovation less formidable than it appeared to him in January 1785. Between that month and the parliamentary discussion of this subject, in the following April, five impressions of the Sermon were sold; a sixth edition is now sent abroad in this humble guise at a time, when the author apprehends that any innovation in the matter of parliamentary representation (especially if it should constitute a House of Commons of the novel sort, agreeably to the wish of our modern reformers, without expectation of any good from royal smiles or ministerial influence) would pretty certainly unite in one strong cabal, the representatives of the people, who might then overpower the other states of the realm; and among whom an English or a Scotch Roberespierre arising, would easily act over again, in our highly-favoured island, the sad scenes of savage despotism which disgrace the once-polished, but now ferocious France. To make the body of the people politicians and philosophers is, in the nature of things, absolutely impossible; but it may be no difficult task for a set of factious demagogues, by declaiming on the rights of men, and by holding up to their view new constitutions of yesterday as more conducive to happiness than our own, which has stood the test of ages; It may be thus, I say, no difficult task to render the populace impatient of government, eager for change, and ripe for rebellion. The janatical reformers of the present day, when they rail against ancient prejudices, are themselves the slaves of modern ones.

Oaks, Canterbury, 1793.



PROV. XX. 21.

My Son, fear thou the Lord and the King, and meddle not with them that are given to change.

WE are this day assembled, to express our abhorrence of an action which involved our forefathers in *guilt* and *infamy*; and to deprecate that vengeance, which, for such an unheard-of-crime, may justly be inflicted on us their children.

As we look not for any resurrection of the *body-politic*, and as in the future world there will be no distinction of nations, but each individual will be rewarded according to his works---the guilt of nations (if punished at all) *must* be punished in the *present* state.

That nations, as such, are capable of guilt, and that they are, by consequence, liable to punishment, is the doctrine of Scripture, and must be admitted by every man who believes in God's moral government of the world.

That the punishment of nations may be delayed, 'till their iniquities be *full*, is likewise sufficiently obvious.

That the guilt, which we now deplore, was in *some sense* national, needs no proof: the nation confesses it: and every one knows that it was by a *pretended* national authority, that the virtuous Sovereign was brought to the block.

To prevent the iniquities of our fathers from being visited on us, in a national manner; the *only* manner, I apprehend, that the sins of the fathers are ever visited on their children; it will be our wisdom to avoid their ways, those ways which they pursued in attempting, by violent methods, to *reform the Constitution*.

It should seem then that I cannot better fulfil the purpose for which I stand here, than by endeavoring to persuade you "to fear the Lord and the King, and not to meddle with them that are given to change."

To this end, it is proposed to shew you, that Civil Government is the ORDINANCE OF GOD: and then I shall point out the danger and the sin of making *violent innovations* in any constitution of government whatever, that has been long established, and to which the people have been accustomed quietly to submit.

FIRST, the nature of man---the constitution of his mind as well as of his body, shews clearly that his Creator intended him for *Society*. No other animal is sent into the world in so *helpless a condition* as this *Lord of the Creation*; naked, yet un-

fitted to bear the inclemencies of the weather ; necessarily requiring food, yet utterly unable to procure it for himself.

Thus circumstanced, if destitute of parental protection, *few and evil* would be the *moments* of his life. Thus totally dependent must *every* descendant of Adam be contented to remain during the period of infancy and childhood--in the more rigid climates, during a much longer one.

When he arrives at that stage of life at which he may be supposed capable, in some measure to take care of himself ; should he separate from his parents, and roam alone among the wilds, he might, perhaps, in the more favourable regions of the globe, be able to support for a few years, a wretched existence ;--But to render life, in any degree, pleasant and desirable, many more things are *absolutely necessary* than can possibly be provided by the labor and ingenuity of an *individual*.

Should this *solitary* man take, from the other sex, such a help as inclination might prompt him to seek, or as accident might bring within his reach, by that association his *hands* would indeed be doubled, but so would his *wants* too ; in the *rearing* (for we speak not of the *education*) of children, he would soon encounter difficulties so numerous and so formidable, that the utmost stretch of imagination cannot conceive him *able*, if *disposed*, to overcome them.

But, suppose all these wants supplied, all these obstacles surmounted, and a *family grown up*. Suppose that little community *doing* all that a single family is *capable of doing*, towards supporting themselves, by gardening and agriculture, by hunting and by a few cattle, casually got and tamed ; *these* occupations would engross their *whole* time ; leaving neither leisure nor inclination for aught beside. Man's *higher faculties* would remain unemployed and uncultivated ; for those arts and sciences which are indispensibly necessary to teach men how to use their nobler faculties, and to unfold their reason, are not the growth of single families.

Hence, in such a state, man must remain a stranger to religion and morality. He could have no knowledge of the greatest and most beneficent of beings, by whom he was created, and would little surpass, in excellence or dignity, his brethren the beasts of the forest.

That this is not a visionary theory, is evident from the history of the *new world*. When that immense continent was first discovered, such of its inhabitants as lived in disjointed independent families, or in very small tribes, were exactly in this degenerate state, strangers to all the arts, and to all the comforts of life, and, " without God in the world," they carried about with them scarcely any marks of humanity but their *form*. In the *kingdoms* where society was formed, and a regular subordination established, the case was far otherwise.

The

The people were in a degree civilized, they had some acquaintance with many of the *arts*, the *elegancies*, and even the *luxuries* of life. And although by the *nature* of their governments, and their *monstrous idolatries*, they were prevented from attaining to that degree of knowledge and politeness which has been attained by nations upon whom "the sun of righteousness hath arisen," yet, when compared with the *wandering tribes* around them, they were happy, intelligent, and polite.

Now as that superiority in improvement could be owing to nothing but the mutual aid *afforded by society*; and as the human race, when out of society, degenerates *almost* to the level of the brute creation, SOCIETY must undoubtedly be the state intended for man by his maker.

But society necessarily implies laws and subordination. A number of men living together in a state of absolute equality, and indulging each his own humour, would form a confused rabble: instead of affording one another mutual assistance, "every man would do what is right in his own eyes;" every man would grasp at as much as he could; and in the general scramble, the strong would destroy the weak.

In *modern philosophy*, the social affections hold a very conspicuous place; and from the certain existence, and supposed influence, of these affections, have torrents of senseless declamation been poured forth in praise of the *state of nature*; of that *imaginary state* in which, during the early ages of the world, men are *supposed* to have lived together, while every man was *his own legislator*.

That there *never was* such a state as this, all the records of antiquity, to which any credit is due (with the books of Moses at the head of them) agree in assuring us. That there *never could have been* such a state, is almost self-evident.

For, tho' it cannot be denied that there is implanted in the human heart A PUBLIC AFFECTION, which makes even *children* delight in society; yet in minds uncultivated, that public affection hath but little strength, and is by no means sufficiently enlarged to comprehend the *whole species*, or even *many individuals*.

How far, for instance, does the public affection of a low illiterate clown extend? *Probably*, not beyond the limits of his own family, and nearest relations, *certainly* not beyond the limits of the village or parish wherein he resides: And when public affection opposes itself to the principle of self-love, in every *uncultivated* mind, in the high or low, it is always foiled in the contest.

Indeed, were mankind compounded of nothing but *pure intellect and public affection*---or (such beings as they are) did the interests of *one* never interfere with those of *another*; they might,

might, perhaps, even in SOCIETY, be left to the guidance of their own reason, to the influence of their own internal feelings.

But whilst man is a compound of *reason* and *appetites*, of *public* and *private* affections; and, much more, whilst the interests of *one* man are so frequently *opposed* by those of *another*, it is past dispute that positive laws are absolutely necessary to render society either *comfortable* or *useful*; and indeed to keep it together.

But laws, in the very idea of them, infer *magistrates* of *different orders*, and of various powers; and, as it is impossible to multiply powers to *infinity*, there must, in every state, be some *man*, or *body of men*, vested with supreme and uncontrollable authority. This can only be the *legislature*, to which all *inferior* and *executive* powers must, of necessity, be subject; and to the decrees of which every individual of the state is bound to pay obedience, as he values the *blessings of society*, and as he would shun the *horrors of anarchy*.

Whatever therefore, in the wild sallies of imagination, men of warm genius may have advanced in favor of *absolute liberty*, and *boundless freedom*, it must be plain to every one (who can conceive the difference between the cabin of a savage and a commodious house, between a rude barbarian and an enlightened religious philosopher, between a people living wild in caves and woods, and a nation in full possession of ease and affluence) that *government* is the true and solid basis of *rational freedom*, and the sole foundation of all that can be styled dignity and happiness in this world.

But, whatever is essential to the happiness of man must be agreeable to the will of God, who cannot be imagined to have had any other view in creation than the felicity of his creatures.

The absolute necessity of some supreme authority to enact laws, and to punish the violators of them, is as convincing a proof that *civil government* is a *divine ordinance*, as St. Paul's declaration to that purpose, in his epistle to the Romans.

Particular *forms* of government (the force of which depending little on the tempers of men we may deduce from them consequences *only not* as certain and general as from mathematical sciences) may be devised on *earth*; and they may be different in different nations, but still, let us attend to a most important distinction in this matter, altho' *forms* of government may be of *man's* device, *so* is not *government itself*; that is from *above*, for "the most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men, and giveth them to whomsoever he will."

SECONDLY, to trace government from its rude origin, thro' all the stages of perfection and refinement of which it is capable, is foreign from my purpose, and far beyond the limits of the present discourse, neither shall I waste your time in comparing

paring the *various forms* of government existing in divers countries ; and in a fruitless endeavour to decide peremptorily which of them is *best* : it is my business to proceed, under the direction of the text, to shew the danger and the sin of making *violent innovations* in any form that hath been long and quietly established. “ My son, fear thou the Lord and the King, and meddle not with them that are given to change.”

Altho’ the wise man *particularly* specifies the *King* as the power which, after GOD, it is our duty to fear ; yet it is not to be imagined that his prohibition against “ meddling with them that are given to change” is applicable *only* to persons living under kingly governments.

The *danger* to be apprehended from *innovations* is as great, perhaps greater, in popular than in monarchical forms. No great and *violent* change can be effected in any constitution, but by armed force ; now should an absolute prince be slain, and the government be dissolved, that form, being simple and uniform, may be *instantly restored* by placing another monarch on the vacant throne. But in a complicated constitution, consisting of various parts, the least *innovation* (provided it be *perceptible* by the people at large) will not fail to split them into a thousand fierce and rancorous parties. If, while things are in this state, the government be dissolved (which in such cases is always to be dreaded) *when* or *how* it may be restored, can be known *only* to HIM “ who stilleth the raging of the sea, and the madness of the people.”

Nothing human is absolutely fixed : nations, as well as individuals, are progressive ; and what was fit for the last age, may not be proper for the next. Gentle alterations in the modes of government are, perhaps, unavoidable ; but great and violent innovations no *individual* is entitled to make. Indeed such alterations are very *dangerous* to be attempted even by the *legislature itself*, and, if experience may be credited, much more *ill* than *good* is ever to be expected from them.”

The patrons of the proposed innovations may have the *best intentions*, and yet, unless the *whole community* should agree in sentiment as to its *fitness or necessity*, the consequence of introducing it may too probably be *fatal*. For the “ beginning of “ strife -especially of political strife--is as when one letteth “ out water ;” at first it runs in a gentle rill, but, by degrees, the rill swells into a mighty torrent, that sweeps away every thing before it.

The usual pretence of those “ who are given to change,” is to *redress grievances*,, and to *reform the constitution*. One may, however, very safely appeal to the experience of all ages and nations, nay to the common sense of all mankind, whether under the *worst* constitution with which we are acquainted, the people *in general* can suffer any grievance equal to the
miseries

miseries of a civil war ; and every *violent* innovation in the state hath been and always will be attended by a civil war.

Nor are the horrors alluded to confined to the time of the contest ; by no means, for it hath been commonly found that, after civil broils, a return of peace hath not brought back with it *freedom* and *happiness*. Not to insist upon the executions, proscriptions, and confiscations which must inevitably take place, *whichever* party prevails---it is hardly to be expected that, if the Sovereign prove victorious, the *grievances* complained of should be redressed ; an unsuccessful rebellion having been ever found to strengthen the government it intended to destroy ; but should success declare for the popular party, the leader of that party, at the head of a victorious army, may easily seize the supreme power, and amply supply by *force* what he wants of *right*.

Thus, instead of finding their Constitution *reformed*, the people will feel themselves enslaved by a *military tyrant* ; and perceive, when too late, that “ the little finger of the “ *Protector* of their liberties is heavier than the loins of their “ lawful Sovereign” ; that if the yoke laid upon them *formerly* was heavy, that under which they *now* groan is heavier ; and that “ if they were *before* chastised with whips, they are “ *now* scourged with scorpions.” This is the *natural*, I had almost said the *necessary*, issue of every insurrection against the Legislature. The insurgents are not *sure* to obtain a better government, but they *are* *sure*, by overthrowing that which is established, to engage their fellow-citizens in civil wars, cabals, factions, and universal confusion ; and to open a door for the admission of those horrid evils in future, upon pretences the most false and frivolous.

The love of our country then opposeth the *overthrow* of subordination, and indeed every thing conspires to shew that it is neither *safe* nor *lawful* to “ meddle with them that are given to change.”

THIRDLY, if *this general reasoning* be not sufficiently clear, the matter now under consideration may be *illustrated* by a short sketch of the origin of that rebellion which made England “ a reproach unto our neighbors, and a scorn and derision to those that were round about us.”

When the first James succeeded to the English throne, our Constitution was very different from what it is at present.---- The government was more arbitrary, the royal prerogative less limited, and the liberties of the people less accurately defined. The meetings of Parliament were so precarious, and the *Sessions* so short, that when men's eyes were directed upwards, in search of sovereign power, the King *alone* was apt to strike them as the *only* permanent magistrate invested with the whole authority of the state.

Matters had gone on thus so long, that (by a great majority of the nation) Monarchy absolute, simple and unmixed, was conceived to be the Government of England; and Parliaments, consisting of the three estates of the realm, were supposed to form *only* the ornament of the fabric, without being in any degree, *essential* to its existence.

For more than a century before the accession of James, all English Monarchs had uniformly claimed the dispensing power, that of exacting forced loans and benevolences, of altering the customs, and of creating monopolies. And, be it remembered, that, during the whole period of English history, strict obedience had been required to *proclamations* as to *laws*.

James, as was very natural, thought himself entitled to exercise *all* the powers which his predecessors had exercised: and, no doubt, esteemed it his *duty* to transmit those powers to his son. Being, however, pacific and, perhaps, timid also, he contented himself with an ostentatious display, both in his speeches and writings, of all that, by his prerogative, he *might do*, whilst in truth he very rarely *did* any thing at all in matters of considerable importance. These occasional stretches or exertions of prerogative were commonly made too with so little dignity, and, for want of political courage, they were so frequently retracted, that they tended rather to *diminish* than to encrease the power of the crown.

The long peace which was preserved during the reign of James afforded men leisure, and a general increase of knowledge gave them ability, to reason upon the nature and design of government, and to enquire into the foundation of that prerogative of which the Monarch was continually boasting.

The more enlightened *part* of the nation were not long occupied in political discussions, before they discovered that the constitutional assembly of the three Estates, of Lords Spiritual, Lords Temporal, and Commons, must have been instituted for some better and higher purpose than merely to serve as an organ of the royal will. Men became now intent upon ascertaining the rights of the senate, and restraining the prerogative of the crown.

The peaceable system of James afforded not any opportunity for accomplishing these aims; and he never deviated from pacific measures until the concluding year of his reign: *Then* he was, in some sort, constrained by the clamors of his subjects, to enter into a war with the most powerful kingdom in Europe. To his son and successor he left the *prosecution* of that contest, under a load of debt, and with an empty treasury.

Charles instantly summoned a Parliament, whom he addressed with the utmost simplicity and cordiality. Secure in the affections of the Commons, with whom he had lately become a favourite, he lightly mentioned his need of a supply;

not doubting but that a competent one would be liberally and cheerfully granted for the prosecution of *their own war*.

The young King, however, was soon convinced of his mistake ; for the Commons (having voted a supply, so scanty, as to evince an intention rather to mock their Sovereign, than to support the war) instantly preferred a complaint of grievances.

For this conduct they did not, perhaps, deserve much blame. Their ancestors had tamely yielded to practices and to precedents favorable to absolute monarchy : it was therefore absolutely necessary to *fix a choice*, either to abandon entirely the privileges of the people, or to guard those privileges with barriers more firm and precise than any hitherto provided by the Constitution.

With pleasure they beheld the king engaged in a foreign war, which could not fail to render him every day more dependent upon his Parliament. It certainly was natural, and in their opinion, allowable, to take advantage of Charles's situation, and to extort from him concessions favorable to civil liberty.

However natural and justifiable these sentiments might be in the Commons, it could not be expected that the King should entertain the same ideas.

Educated heir apparent to a crown, the prerogative of which had long been undefined, and almost unlimited, he could not fail to consider this attempt to erect *new ramparts* against his *authority*, as a violent and indefensible innovation in the constitution. *He* had exercised no authority---(he had not indeed had *time* or *opportunity* to exercise any authority) which had not, without complaint or murmur, been exerted by his predecessors.

Charles well knew that the grievances of which the Commons complained were not the effect of any error in *his* administration---therefore to be thus deserted in the commencement of his reign, and of a war into which popular clamor had driven his father, could not but appear to him cruel and deceitful. When he perceived, as he soon did, that this desertion was a prelude to encroachments upon his authority, and infringements on his prerogative, he failed not to regard those aims as highly criminal and traiterous.

Nor need we wonder at this ; the love of power being, in some sort, natural to the human mind ; and few men being disposed *willingly* to suffer any, but especially inferiors, to wrest from them that influence to which they suppose their right to be indisputable, however it may be disputed.

Possibly, it might have been well for the King and the kingdom if attention had been paid to the complaints of the Commons ; but before any man *blame* a King (whom the venerable
Archbishop

Archbishop Secker styles * “ a willing and a patient martyr . “ to the constitution”) for endeavoring to maintain *unimpaired* the prerogative of the Crown, as he received it, let every reviewer of those turbulent scenes lay his hand upon his heart, and say, as in the presence of that God from whom no secret is hid, “ that, had *he* been in the same elevated station, he would have acted differently.”

In vain hath it been objected that there are rights and privileges *unalienable* from human nature ; and that upon *these* the Crown had long trampled : for, granting the truth of this (which, however, is not self-evident) we ask whether it was reasonable to expect that a young King, should, immediately after his accession, make discovery of this truth, which had lain so long concealed ; or that, because he had *not* discovered it, he should, on this account, be deserted by those who had hurried his father into an expensive war ?

The Commons, however, deaf to the solicitations of their Sovereign, and regardless, it should seem, of the glory of the nation, remained inflexible. Thus circumstanced, it was *natural*, and who can say it was not *wise*, for Charles to dissolve such an assembly ? The next which he called, as if the same men had every where been returned, and as if no time had intervened between the two parliaments, adopted the same principles, and displayed the same views.

The third parliament at first seemed to be actuated by a more candid spirit, but events soon proved that, for violent purposes, they had assumed the mask of moderation. Their *petition of right* having been granted, by which as much liberty was secured to the subject, and as much restraint was imposed on the Sovereign, as the circumstances of the times, and the genius of the people, could admit, there remained no longer any one *real* grievance, of which the Commons could complain.

The constitution was now restored to its primitive purity ; and it was the indispensable duty of the representatives of the people to support the Crown in the prosecution of the people’s war ; in which they had unequivocally promised to adhere to the King with their lives and fortunes.

Had such been their conduct, they would have justified the highest pretensions to patriotism ; they would have deserved the applause of their contemporaries, and the admiration of their posterity : But, alas ! they had other ends in view. Far from being satisfied with this important concession on the part of the Crown, these perverse men were only thereby encouraged to make new demands, and such as, had they been granted, would have entirely changed our ancient constitution both in church and state.

* See his Sermon on 30th January, 1733.

The King, extremely provoked by a factious spirit which he saw that nothing could satisfy, dissolved this parliament likewise; and seeing no prospect of support from his people (among whom the seeds of sedition had been sown with a lavish hand) wisely made peace with his foreign foes—altho' he had not been able to obtain the object, for which his father had commenced, and he himself had continued the war. Disgusted, and surely not without reason, at popular assemblies, a long period was suffered to elapse before the King called another parliament, and it is, perhaps, doubtful whether he would ever have done so, had he not been compelled by a rebellion excited among his Scotch subjects, in behalf of their factious presbytery and impious covenant.

An army of twenty thousand fanatics, rendered desperate and implacable by the curses which their preachers denounced on such as "went not forth to help the Lord against the "mighty," was marching to the borders. At this critical time a Parliament was summoned, and one would conclude that *real* patriots could have had no other object in view than the crushing so unprovoked a rebellion. To crush this Scotch insurrection was, however, far from their wish: regardless of the kingdom, and without deigning to take any notice at all of the royal application for necessary supplies, the Commons entered immediately on their eternal complaint of grievances.

Where great evils lie on all sides, it is very difficult to follow the best counsels. The King was in the greatest doubt and perplexity, and we cannot wonder that a Parliament, which evidently had the peace of the kingdom so little at heart, was hastily dissolved. The dissolution of this assembly was, however, a measure of which the unfortunate Charles soon repented, and which subsequent events, more than a thousand arguments, incline every one *now* to condemn.

The Scotch rebels mean while marched into England, and another Parliament was necessarily called. This assembly began with displaying a disposition more fierce and unrelenting than had been visible in any preceding one. Far from enabling their Prince to subdue the insurgents, this House of Commons actually voted pay for the *Scotch rebels*; with whom they kept up a constant correspondence, and whom it was their avowed intention to retain until the King himself should be totally subdued, and all their own republican purposes effected. "We cannot yet spare the Scotch," (said a popular leader in the cant of those times) "the sons of Zeruiah are still too strong for us." Encompassed with enemies, the sad necessity of the King's affairs determined him to leave this Parliament to itself: a year had not elapsed before Charles beheld his most faithful servant murdered by them, himself stripped of every branch of the prerogative, and the entire authority of the state,
 Executive

executive as well as legislative, assumed by the House of Commons. All this *could* not have been effected by the powers of rhetoric or of reason. The House and the nation were deeply tinctured with fanaticism, and the pulpits, artfully and arbitrarily filled by the Commons with preachers of that description, resounded with faction and enthusiasm.

Hypocrisy, noise, and nonsense expelled sound piety and sober sense; and the sole aim of the preachers was to exasperate the minds of the mob alike against the King and the Bishops: Herein their success certainly equalled their wishes, and probably exceeded their expectations.

A democracy of the worst and most tyrannical sort had now succeeded to our free and ancient government; and as Charles had been compelled to assent to an Act for making this Parliament perpetual, a civil war seemed to be absolutely inevitable, before the constitution could be *restored*. Accordingly vigorous preparations were made by each party for an appeal to the sword; it matters not at all, which of them drew it *first*, the King having been unquestionably constrained to arm in self-defence; if, indeed, his troops first took the field, yet the Parliament had previously wrested from him the militia, they had seized his castles, and had appointed to them governors by their own authority.

To trace the *progress* of that calamitous war is no part of my plan; the *issue* of it is but too well known, and reflects indelible disgrace on this nation; as, under pretence of *amending*, it *overturned* the constitution in church and state, and murdered one of the best and most accomplished princes that ever wore a crown.

Had Charles been born an absolute Monarch, his humanity and his good sense would have rendered his reign happy, and his memory precious. Had the limitations of prerogative been, in his time, fixed, his integrity would have made him consider as sacred the boundaries of the constitution. Had the Parliament restored to him his *just rights*, after that those rights had been precisely ascertained, his high sense of honor, and his fear of God, would have prevented his ever stretching the regal authority beyond its prescribed limits.

But the Commons had other ends in view. The utter abolition of royalty was in truth the *original* aim of all, who *now* remained in that factious assembly; and one of their leaders, soon after the murder of their pious, virtuous, and mild Sovereign, confessed in the House that "if they were for a King, the last was as proper as any gentleman in England."

No sooner was the monarchy dissolved than the House of Peers was, very consistently, voted to be useless; and the Commons erected themselves into a democracy, under the denomination of "keepers of the liberties of England."

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This new form of government was very soon overturned by a fanatical, hypocritical, military despot, the arch-traitor Cromwell; who, seizing the *whole* authority of the state into his own hands, retorted upon the Presbyterian sect, and the pretended patriots, part of that severity which they had exercised towards the adherents of the Church and the King.

Such was the issue of an attempt to reform the constitution by violent means; even when its reformation was confessedly needful. Upon this pretence were the disturbances begun, and upon this pretence was the monarch murdered.

“ Let not us therefore murmur, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer;” but let us rather learn wisdom from the folly of our ancestors, and cautiously avoid “ meddling with them that are given to change.” We enjoy the most free and equal government with which any age or nation was ever blessed: a government which (now that the boundaries of the constitution are fixed) as far surpasseth in excellence the long famed politics of Athens and of Rome, as *they* surpassed the despotism of Persia and the East.

At the head of this government reigns a most excellent Prince, equally amiable in public and in private life; a Prince who has uniformly acted like the father of his people; and has preserved entire that constitution both in Church and State, for the preservation of which his family was called to the Throne.

If, in return for his paternal care of us, we could be so ungrateful as to withhold from him our cordial affection and cheerful obedience, we should deserve to be abhorred by God and good men, as a people whom neither *past miseries* nor *present mercies* can bind to their duty.

But, of disloyalty there is, I flatter myself, little room for apprehension: The virtues of the Sovereign have secured to him the hearts of his subjects. The dread is (at present), from another quarter and of another kind. I mean, from attempts, however well meant, to reform the representation of the people in the House of Commons.

That our constitution is *absolutely* perfect, it would be ridiculous to assert. Perfection belongs not to lapsed humanity. That a better constitution may be *conceived*, we do not positively deny. For many theories may be clearly conceived, which by the utmost human ingenuity are not reducible to practice.

It may, however, be confidently asserted that so few and so unimportant are the defects, so many and so valuable the perfections, of the nicely balanced British Constitution, as to render it highly probable that any innovations in its system will be more likely to injure than to improve it.

The people, it is alledged, are *not fairly and equally* represented

sented. Granting the truth of this position, what benefit could they derive from a *more* equal representation, which they have not enjoyed, for almost a century, from the *present one*? During all *that* time our *rights and liberties* have been carefully preserved; and, in the name of common sense, what would we have *more*?

No plan of representation could possibly be devised in which the WHOLE NATION would agree: Why then should we hazard the consequences of an innovation, which it is *barely possible* might do some good; but which is much more likely to *create discord*, and to proceed to lengths which were never intended? Every rank of men, amongst us, both in Church and State, may, doubtless, learn *most* important lessons from the mistakes, as well as from the crimes, of their predecessors.

Many popular leaders, in the beginning of the reign of Charles, were *wise men and true patriots*. Now, if differences between *such Senators* and *such a Sovereign* produced in the end the horrid consequences which we this day lament, what dreadful confusion have we not just cause to expect, from differences about the Constitution excited, as seems at present intended, among the *people at large* throughout the whole island, who have neither *leisure* nor *abilities* to comprehend the subject? Besides, altho' the spirit of superstition be now so fast asleep that nothing like that which happened in the last century can be apprehended in the present, yet let us not forget that very lately the President of the Protestant Association assembled twenty thousand followers in the cause of fanaticism.

Should the legislature, however, in its wisdom, so far yield to the fashionable cry for a *parliamentary reformation*, as to make any alteration in the House of Commons, it will, in that case, unquestionably be *our duty*, and the duty of every Briton, quietly to submit, altho' the alteration adopted should appear to us most undesirable.

In every state, be the form of government monarchical, aristocratical, democratical, or a mixed one consisting of a *fusion* of the three simple forms, in every state "*the*" supreme "*power is ordained of GOD, whosoever therefore resisteth that power, resisteth the ordinance of GOD, and they that resist, (saith an apostle) shall receive to themselves damnation.*"

In a word—whether the legislature shall preserve the state as it now is, or alter any part of it, let us, as good subjects, and as friends to our country, "*study to be quiet, and mind every one his own business*"—Let us, by the grace of GOD, restrain passion, and overcome prejudice, in ourselves. As subjects of a free constitution let us be particularly careful to bear in mind the counsel of the wise King, "*to leave off conten-*
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"tion before it be meddled with." So shall we learn to behave suitably, according to Saint Peter's rule—"as free, yet not using our liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of GOD."

This is the most effectual course we can take to avert the judgment still hanging over us for the horrid crime which we this day deplore. And, if the spirits of just men made perfect have any knowledge of what is doing on earth, *this* is the course which, above all others, will atone to the Spirit of the ROYAL MARTYR for the barbarous treatment given him by our forefathers.

If we must be *reformers*, let us, by contemplating the good parts of other men's characters, and the faulty ones of our own, learn to think justly, that is humbly, of ourselves.---Humility will wonderfully dispose us to contentment, as to all external circumstances, be they public or private.

Every Christian is a patriot, or lover of his country---every real patriot will then apply himself to personal reformation, and by so doing he will labor to secure happiness to his native land.

Hypocrisy and fanaticism were the characteristics of the last age, as infidelity, and a careless neglect of religion and its duties, are the crying sins of the passing century. Let but these evils be done away, and we shall soon happily experience that for *political* reformations there will be no occasion.

By "rendering unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," and to God the things that are God's," and by "doing" to all men whatsoever we would they should do unto us," by applying (in every *private* and *public* calamity) to the ever present source of life, comfort and blessing, we shall happily experience that the *compassion*, as well as the *power*, of our great Redeemer, is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Safe under *His* protection, who alone "maketh men to be of one mind" in any community, delivered from all corroding anxiety about lives, liberties and fortunes, we shall cheerfully pass the time of our pilgrimage here in hope; and when called to quit this scene, wherein every thing is mutable, and which affords *nought good unmixed with ill*, we shall be found meet to relish the occupations, and to taste the delights, of that blissful Kingdom, which, by our adorable Redeemer, hath been opened to all believers.

Now to that God whom all Christians adore, to the holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three persons and one God, be ascribed all honor and glory, now and for ever.

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